



P.O. Box 457
Storm Lake, IA 50588

News Release: Grand Marshals Carry on Family Tradition Through Spectacular Firework Show

Storm Lake, Iowa (June 11, 2024) – Star Spangled Spectacular 2024 commodores, Holly Schipper and Liz Smith, have named the Fireworks Crew its 2024 Big Parade Grand Marshals in honor of this year’s theme: Light up the Sky on the Fourth of July.

The Crew has been illuminating the skies above a reflecting Storm Lake each Independence Day for more than 40 years, but you won’t catch them waving to a crowd at the 10:30 a.m. Big Parade; they’ll be busy setting up for the evening show off the Chautauqua Park Jetty, which takes months of planning and more than 15 hours of setup.

“It’s quite a process,” says Orren Knoffloch, storied member, and face, of the Fireworks Crew. “The whole show leading up to the finale is hand-shot rather than using electronics, so our setup begins in the morning, is completed by 9 p.m., and then we give two warning shots before the 10 p.m. show takes off.”

Knoffloch has been lighting off fireworks in Storm Lake since Balloon Days in the early 80s when his friend, the late Mike Morrow, invited him to lend a hand during the Labor Day celebration. Now, Morrow’s sons Erik and Matt carry on the tradition alongside Knoffloch for the Star Spangled Spectacular. Other volunteers on the Crew include Loren Person, Paul Henze, Mark Burkitt, Clark Gordon, and Scott Randall, who have all dedicated their last 20-plus holidays to the fireworks show. Scott Archer flies in from Phoenix each year, and Knoffloch’s grandson Jackson Garret is now certified to shoot fireworks as well. Others include Brad Sergent and Gordon’s grandson, Matt.

The long-standing Fireworks Crew has seen some close calls over the years, including one hospital visit, a water bail, and even some other tales that “we like to keep to ourselves,” jokes Knoffloch. Which is why thorough training, a background check, and a shooting certificate is required, as well as acquiring special permits, insurance, and working closely with the Storm Lake Fire Department. They also receive annual assistance from the Parks Department and Public Safety.

“A dependable Crew, volunteers, and donations make all the difference,” says Knoffloch, who recalls shooting fireworks from a barge and the Big Island in the early days. But he credits the heavy-lifting to the Morrow Brothers, both Storm Lake High School grads, who hear stories of their father’s local fireworks productions after moving to Storm Lake in 1975.



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“I’ve been around fireworks forever now, so it’s a family tradition,” says Erik, whose son Kaben often helps with setup.

The Crew first receives its budget from the Star Spangled Spectacular each winter, then forms a plan consisting of 3- to 6-inch shells and a dazzling finale. They then receive and sort shells July 2-3, load trailers, prepare racks, and begin setup. The select few who are certified to shoot are insured through, and paid by, a fireworks supplier. But once they receive their check, the Morrow brothers generously donate it back to the Star Spangled Spectacular in order to put on another luminous show the following year.

Matt, who works for Stan Houston Equipment Co. and resides in Omaha with his wife Sarah, has only missed a couple shows over the years. He says, “We’d of course like to see the show continue to grow each year, as we care about the celebration and making sure it’s done well.” However, it takes equipment, strong hands, and increased technology to ensure the dangerous work is done safely each year.

“Orren’s done a great job teaching us the meticulous process over the years, but timing of the fuses is everything. We prioritize safety above all else and pray for clear skies with no rain,” says Matt.

Erik, who owns Morrow Contracting, adds, “Orren has been a mentor of ours and father figure. It’s great to see him being recognized for his work, and humbling for the rest of us as well.” The Morrow brothers tend to the racks of shells all day on July 4 before setting them off into the sky at dusk.

Knoffloch has never missed a show, and even requested that his son move his wedding date to accommodate the fireworks setup in the days leading up to July 4. He does, however, step away from the morning setup just long enough to join his fellow Vietnam War veterans in the Big Parade where he can be seen driving a 1969 Kaiser, better known as a “Deuce and a Half.”

The “Round up for Fireworks” fundraiser with Fareway Meat and Grocery takes place through Saturday, June 22, granting customers the opportunity to round up to the nearest dollar at the register. Proceeds will go toward funding the annual fireworks show. Donations can also be made at www.starspangledspectacular.net/donations or via mail to:

Josh Newhouse, Fundraising Co-Chair
PO Box 457
Storm Lake, IA 50588

About the Star Spangled Spectacular

A favorite Northwest Iowa tradition, Storm Lake’s annual Star Spangled Spectacular celebrates Independence Day along the City’s beautiful shores. The family-friendly event is held July 3-4 and welcomes fresh entertainment and returning favorites such as The Big Parade, food and shopping



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vendors, a classic Car Cruise, the Ride-Run, fireworks, a Patriotic Ceremony, a Kiddie Parade, and more. Visit www.starspangledspectacular.net.

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